

FAITH AND  
CHARACTER



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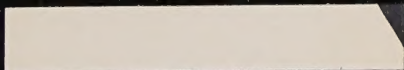
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WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?





## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

*An Inquiry now that the Critical Era has passed by and the old faith must be restated.*

It is a proverb that the experience of one human heart is the experience of all mankind. Believing this to be true, all the orators, from Cicero to Wendell Phillips, have chosen one hearer out of the vast audience, and have addressed themselves to him, knowing that to carry his judgment and to persuade his will was to carry the multitude over to the new reform, or institution. Not otherwise, the doubt of a single individual is often a voice that interprets the inquiry and unrest of many deeply reflective minds. The old faiths have gone, for many, and they know not how to build up the structure of a new working faith. Doubtless every busy pastor, every religious editor, every teacher in the college or university, has received a letter of inquiry similar to the one that will be used in these pages to give point to these studies in

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the Christian life and the building of character. "I have cut loose from all my old moorings, and am adrift, having lost my sky-pilot, and having no hope of a harbor of refuge or a haven of mental peace," exclaims some youth.

Doubtless this represents the attitude of a large class of educated young men and women. It seems that he is a college man, and has enjoyed all the opportunities of the higher education. He is interested in the great social problems, and has read widely in every realm. Unfortunately, through much reading, he has become involved in mental doubt and perplexity. He has read modern science, and has noted its bearing upon religion. He has read the Higher Criticism, and it has changed his ideas about the Bible. He has come to confess the uniformity of law, and at last has found in it a basis for a belief in the doctrine of God's providence. He concedes that it is possible that the era of skepticism is giving way to an era of faith, optimism, and happiness. "You have been telling us," he exclaims, "what is left of the Bible, what is left of prayer and providence, in the light of modern science, and you have given us the new thought of God, and Christ, and immortality.

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But what has modern scholarship to say about this Christian life? In the age of John and James the disciples had only to leave their boats and nets and follow their Master across the fields. What is a college-bred man to do now in order to become a Christian?" Surely life can hold no more important question than this. Many there are who now stand at the parting of life's ways. Because modern science has profoundly affected their ideas about the Bible, the creeds, and ecclesiastical institutions, they also fear lest physical science has altered the soul's relations toward Jesus Christ as the Master and Saviour. All such dwell midway between doubt and decision, and know only intermittent happiness. Like young Hamlet of old, many will be slain by uncertainty and indecision. In the interest of those who stand hesitant between their doubts and fears and the teachings of Christ, let us ask and try to answer the question, What is it to be a Christian, and how shall I become one, now that this critical era has passed by?

Now, our intellectual footing will be the firmer if we note at the outset that the changes brought in by physical science are more seeming than real. These changes, indeed, have

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to do with non-essentials, rather than with the fundamentals of Christianity. Our age is constantly affirming that all things have become new. We are ceaselessly reminded that old tools, old medicines, old books, old agriculture, old customs, have passed away. But in reality the change is seeming and superficial rather than real. We have a new physics, but there are no more elements in nature than there were in the morning of creation. We have also a new theory as to how Moses came to write the Ten Commandments, but the same old moral principles are with us; and from the moment when the first man entered this earthly scene to the last moment of eternity, it has been and will be wrong to kill and steal, and it will be right to love and hope and pray. We have changed our theory as to how David came to write his penitential Psalms, but the fact of temptation, of the moral lapse, of hours of penitence, when the eyes are blinded with tears and the heart broken with grief, is an abiding fact.

If, in the light of science, we have re-written our theories of conscience, of sin, of churches, of creeds, we have not changed the great facts which these theories describe.

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If for the easy limits of the Garden of Eden we now have the stellar infinitudes, and if for that hand's-breadth named six thousand years we now have the geologic ages, with the new and larger temple of nature, we have a new and nobler worship. Also the extended heavens declare the glory of God as the tiny heavens of Moses never could, and the new stellar roof covers a temple worthy of Him who inhabits its eternity. Indeed, so far from science having disturbed any of the great fundamental facts of the Christian life, it has only strengthened them by the new explanations. We can make no greater mistake than to fix our eyes upon the changing theory and neglect the moral facts that are permanent and personal and vital. Alas for the man who is so concerned with the thought that the old sickle is gone and the new reaper has come, that he forgets to sow and cultivate and reap, for that foolish man will die of hunger! More pathetic still the case of the youth who is fascinated by the changes that are now being recorded by different authorities, and flits from book to book, from theory to theory, as the butterfly flits from flower to flower, and so neglects the culture of the spiritual life,

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starves his finer and deeper convictions, and stands at last in a critical hour of his career unsupported by the great spiritual realities with which life is concerned. The theories are transient, but the truth is permanent. The geographies come and go, but the mountains and hills and seas abide. The physiologies change, the human body remains. Dynasties pass, and political parties disappear, but not the people. Theological statements rise and fall like the grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God standeth forever. God's truth is eternal, man's statement is temporal, growing with man's growth.

Keeping in mind these principles, what is it to be a Christian? From the viewpoint of careful definition, the Christian is one who is loyal to Christ. Having read Christ's words, the Christian feels that these words command his reason. Looking out upon Christ's career, upon the beauty of his life and the spotlessness of his character, the Christian affirms that that character commands his reverent admiration. Having studied Christ's attitude toward little children, toward the publican and prodigal, he is a Christian who feels



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that Christ's bearing toward the poor and weak commands his sympathies. Having read his Golden Rule, his Sermon on the Mount, his law of love, the Christian bows in loyal acceptance of Christ's ideals of possible excellence, feeling that these ideals at once condemn his past manner of life, and reveal present latent powers of character opening up new excellences possible to the future. Just as an artist pupil becomes a disciple when he yields himself fully to the influence of some great master, just as Tennyson became a disciple of Shakespeare when he yielded his imagination fully to the imagination of the great poet, so a man is a Christian when he yields himself to the influence of Christ, and feels a passionate desire to be loyal to Christ's life and teachings. For the whole emphasis is upon loyalty to Christ as a Master and Saviour. A man is not a Christian because he has wrought out fully his idea of the Bible. That is important, but it is fidelity to a book. A man is not a Christian because he has wrought out his idea of a creed. That is important, but it is fidelity to a philosophy. A man is not a Christian because he yields himself to some priest or bishop: that is fidelity to a human

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teacher. A man is not a Christian because he has fulfilled the directions of a church: that is fidelity to an organization. These things are important, but they are not first and essential. The one essential thing is fidelity to Christ himself.

All this becomes very clear if only in our thought we journey back to the time when Christ met Peter and John in the way. Beholding these men, he said to them, "Follow me." Straightway they forsook all and followed him. Now, from that moment they were Christians. Yet they had no idea about an inspired Bible, because the New Testament was not written. They knew nothing whatever about a creed, for theology had not yet taken its rise. They were not faithful to a church, for the church was not yet organized; but they were faithful to Christ as a person. Therefore they were Christians. When long time had passed by, slowly the men began to state their spiritual experiences in intellectual forms named creeds, and to work out their methods in Christian activity in customs named the institutions of the church. But these things came afterward, and were the result of the fact that men had been Chris-

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tians beforehand. Fortunately, it is not necessary to know in order to be. Life goes before knowledge. The little babe in the cradle is a person and fulfills all the essential experiences of life. It sees its toys and its mother's face, but it could not give any systematic statement regarding optics. It lives and loves and grows, but it knows nothing whatever about the laws of physiology and the origin of its life.

Children enjoy music long before they understand the color, scale, and the laws of harmony. Indeed, millions go through life enjoying the beautiful in nature and art without ever knowing anything about the laws by which colors complement each other. Also millions go through life as Christians without ever stopping to work out philosophically their ideas about the Bible, or the church, or the creed. And yet they are Christians, because they are loyal to Christ. History tells of a young paint-grinder in the studio of Italy's greatest master, who developed striking evidences of artistic skill. When an enemy of the great teacher came to the boy and urged him to found a school of his own, saying that wealth and honors and invitations to kings'

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all  
palaces might be his, the youth answered, in effect, "I am not ambitious to found a school or dwell in a palace, but I am ambitious to catch Raphael's spirit and reproduce in myself his ideals." Now, that simple thought condenses in a word the essence of the Christian life. It is an ambition to rise to the level of Christ's thoughts, to feel his throb of sympathy toward the poor and weak, to abhor evil as he abhorred it, to hunger for righteousness as he hungered for it, and to walk with our Father as Christ walked with his. He is a Christian who is loyal to Christ in thoughts, sympathies, friendships, purposes, and ideals.

Another question of like simplicity and importance is, How shall I become a Christian? We have seen that God's universe is one, that there is no line of demarkation between the secular and sacred, that Christianity simply represents an extension of the laws of God into the soul's higher realm. Scientifically, therefore, a man becomes a Christian in as normal and natural a way as he becomes a carpenter or a printer. When a youth stands upon the threshold of his career, he passes in review the various handicrafts and professions.

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He argues that he is unfitted to be a lawyer or a teacher, or editor, because he has no skill in writing or speaking. Contrariwise, he finds that the human body has such fascination for him that he is always trying to read a face so as to interpret the state of the person's health, and he decides to enter the medical school and become a physician. Once the decision has been reached he waits for nothing magical or mysterious. He simply buys a book on anatomy or physiology and sits down at his desk and goes to work.

When a traveler finds himself going toward the north, where dwell storms, arctic snows, and perpetual winter, once he feels sure that he is moving in the wrong direction, he turns sharply upon his heel and marches toward the south. But in this reversal of his direction there is nothing magical, nothing mysterious. Yet when he has turned toward the south we must not suppose that the traveler has reached that land of tropic fruits and flowers. Perhaps he has taken but one step toward a summer land that is a thousand miles away. Nevertheless, he has started for that glorious clime. Thus the youth cleanses his mouth of profanity and starts toward purity. He

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cleanses his appetite of gluttony and starts toward self-control. He cleanses his habits from idleness and vice and starts toward industry and thrift. These are only first steps, doubtless, and beginnings. Every refusal, however, of temptation, every rebuff to passion, every right thought, every noble aspiration, are steps in the right direction. Only they are first steps, and the man must climb on. For building a character is like building a house. The architect excavates the cellar, but that is not enough. He builds the walls, but the rain and snow may still come in. He springs the roof, but the rooms are bare. He furnishes and adorns halls, parlors, and sleeping-chambers, but the house is empty. At last he brings in his loved ones, and in the sounds of little children and the words of welcome to arriving friends makes the home bright and all the days beautiful. Not otherwise is it in the Christian life. The disciple does away with every animal passion and fleshly impulse. Upon the foundation of Jesus Christ he builds the moralities and erects a soul building, but the structure is not complete until the house, built of good habits, right thoughts and purposes, is illumined with



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all heavenly qualities of love, joy, peace, trust. The friendship of Christ completes man's life and crowns it.

But the law of life is the law of growth. Seeds grow, and men must grow also. In the realm of intellect students grow, and their teachers too. Beginning with a mere impulse to follow Christ in thought and life, the Christian goes forward until thoughts, affections, and all ambitions are touched with the sacred fire. Every morning he begins anew his ascending march. Slowly he unfolds, going from littleness to full likeness to Christ. For let no man think that it is an easy thing to be a Christian. All high developments for reason or taste or conscience are difficult, and represent drill and practice. It is hard to be born and maintain life as a babe. It is hard to be a little child and maintain health midst all the ignorances, distemperatures, and perils that come in like a flood against young life. It is hard to be a young man and to maintain one's spotless character midst the fierce flames of temptation that burst forth upon every side. If a man aspires to be a great jurist he gives himself to the study of great arguments, and the history of

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celebrated decisions, and practices the art of bringing high truths to bear upon judges and jury, and slowly climbs to the level of Marshall or Webster. If a man wishes to be a great scientist he begins where Darwin began, by studying the earthworms under his feet, and noting the movements of bugs, the flight of pigeons, until slowly, by accurate observation and patient, persevering drill he comes to be a world-wide scientist. There is no royal road to the temple of melody, where St. Cecilia dwells. There is no short cut to the temple of the beautiful, where Apollo reigns as lord of the arts of color, form, and music. The eager aspirant for eloquence, or wealth, or wisdom, begins a long, long way from the excellence that crowns one's life work. Every morning Mother Nature whispers to the youth, "Strive, struggle." Every night her last message is, "Sleep to waken again to new struggles, wrestlings, and achievements." In the realms of conscience and character man must work out his own salvation through ceaseless struggling, toiling long, hard and patiently. And just in proportion as he goes toward excellence does the work become difficult.

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The law of creation is that the higher one climbs, the more intricate and difficult the duties. It is easy to control the ox, and guide the beast across the field. The horse is higher in the scale, and his government asks for a higher degree of skill in guidance. Wind represents a more powerful agent, and happy the sailor who can always guide his boat midst the swirling storms. Steam can scald as well as push, and only experts dare use it. Highest of all is electricity. And he who controls that subtle, invisible, almost omnipotent, force must be an expert indeed. There are five thousand men who can guide the ox where there is one man who can guide the electric current. Not otherwise is it in the Christian life. It may be easy to subdue the forces that make for gluttony and drunkenness and theft, but it is not easy to meet storm with calm, to meet ingratitude with forgiveness, to meet slander and hatred with forbearance and pity. The higher one climbs toward the level of Jesus Christ, the more difficult the task. What an ideal is this, challenging everything in a man's nature! Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the persecuted, the peacemakers. Love

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your enemies. Seek first the kingdom. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. A scholar once exclaimed, "Who knows whether or not Christianity is a success!" It has never been tried.

Have you practiced these things with the same degree of patience with which you have practiced chasing a golf-ball? Can you control your tongue in the use of wit and humor and rebuke with the same skill that an artist controls his brush? In abhorring evil can you condemn it as deftly and surely as a sculptor who chips away the marble, not too little and not too much? Ye are my servants if ye do whatsoever I command you, said Christ. Do you daily read his commands, lift up before yourself the picture of his life and then try to reproduce in yourself his portrait, with the same eager, passionate enthusiasm with which young pupils pursue the ideals of some artist master? The Christian life means growth, drill, and long practice.

But some young man of the higher education, moved by considerations of delicacy and honor, will say, "I am not good enough to join a Christian church." He feels that it is an unworthy and ungenerous thing for him to

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announce himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ unless he represents those high and noble qualities that Christ represents. He thinks that the Platonist must have the qualities of intellect that characterized Plato. He believes that the disciples of Tennyson should have some of Tennyson's skill in mastering verse, and he feels that he who allies himself with the church of Christ ought to be patrician in the beauty and nobility of his character. Now, what is a church? It is a school of morals. What is Christianity? It is the science of right living and character-building. What is the Bible? It is God's hand-book, full of directions for the building of a worthy life, based upon the foundation of Christ. And who is the Christian? He is a pupil in Christ's school. But nobody is received into a school because he is a ripe scholar. When one child goes to a school like the Polytechnic, the principal says, "What do you know about grammar?" "I don't know anything about it; I want to enter the school to learn." "What do you know about Latin and Greek?" "Nothing," the boy answers. "Are you up in history and science and literature?" "No; I am not sure that I know what those big

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words mean," the boy replies. To which the principal answers, "Well, you are sufficiently ignorant to be received. This school is founded for boys who do not know, but want to know." And men are to unite with the church not because they are good, but because they are bad. If a man should come to me and say, "I want to join Plymouth Church; I am a Christian; I never have a wrong thought; I never speak a wrong word; I haven't done a mean or wicked thing for ten years," I would vote against the reception of that man. He is not bad enough to get into Plymouth Church. The church is a school, and Christ is a teacher. And the disciple is a bad man who wants to become a good man, or a good man who wants to become a better one, or the best of men who feels that he wants to be one like Christ. Scientists tell us that, although a star in the sky may be a million miles higher in altitude than our earth, still that star is, in comparison with the infinite distance to the farthest star, side by side with our earth. And in comparison with the purity of God, from the standard of ideal excellence, there is scarcely a hand's-breadth of difference between the lowest sinner and the highest saint.



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All are pupils in the school of character and human life, where Christ is the one Saviour and Lord.

But some one will say, Has modern science then done away with conversion? Is there to be no supernatural, miraculous transformation, by which a lump of something bad, called total depravity, is taken out, and a lump of something good, called a new heart, returned in its place? Men read the lives of David, and Saul on the road to Damascus, and expect some mysterious light to shine upon their pathway. They recall the career of Bunyan, with his days of anguish, his nights of tears and agony, and the sudden joy that struck over him like a flood. Many wait for some similar experience in their own career. Now, if a man will plunge into the passions and sins into which David plunged he will know David's remorse and agony. Contrariwise, if he lives the life of obedience and purity from infancy to maturity, as many of our boys and girls now do, that one will grow naturally and normally in the life that is Christian.

Among the mountains of the Adirondacks there is a beautiful lake called Placid, and on one side of the lake there is a high precipice,

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with springs in the crevasses, and with mud all over the ledges. Last summer a little child, disobeying its parents, climbed up on the side of the rocks, slipped over a boulder, fell upon a ledge covered with slime and spring water, and was carried to the hotel having suffered grievous injury. The face was cut and bleeding, the dress was torn and muddy, and the whole nervous system had suffered from the heavy fall. For days and weeks the child rehearsed the story of its fall, and its marvelous deliverance therefrom. But there was another little companion that kept within the appointed limits, and was far happier with the wild flowers and ferns, and climbing in places that were safe and beautiful. Now, what if this second child, having listened to the deliverance that came to his companion, had longed for a similar marvelous experience, and often commented upon the fact that he had never been delivered from the peril of a heavy fall on the rocks, that he did not know what it was to cry and sob for help, and have some friend appear to be welcomed as an angel of relief, bringing succor and help; and that since he had never fallen in the mire and had his gar-

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ments washed he very much doubted whether he had any right to be happy, or indeed, whether or not he was alive and at Lake Placid at all. If this happy child wants the experience of the first boy, there are plenty of precipices over which he can fall and gash his forehead; there are thorn thickets that will tear his garments; there are serpents in the hedges that will poison his feet with venom; there are bogs that will cover him with slime; and if he wants to ache with pain, and burn with the fever of poison, and tremble with fear, and call for help, and need it very badly, he can very easily obtain the experience. If a youth wants to feel as Bunyan felt, and as many a reformed drunkard and vulgar outcast has felt, it is only necessary for him to sin as they sinned, in order to carry the weight of remorse and bitter memory and agony that they carried. But it is ten thousand times better never to wander from the paths that lead to happiness and peace than to go far astray and be brought back from dangerous experiences, that leave scars upon body and soul alike. Wounds may be healed, but men are always weaker for the wounding.

In the tenement-house district of Brooklyn,

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until recently, there was a row of old rookeries — black, worm-eaten, and ready to fall. Every floor was rotten and full of filth and vermin. Every stair oozed grime, and on damp days the very bricks sweat disease and the germs of death. One day the authorities condemned the old tenements, and a new owner decided to build a factory, large and substantial. The first thing he had to do was to pull down the decaying structure and put a torch to the rotten timbers. Yet when the last heap of rubbish was burned to ashes, and fire had cleansed away the filth of years, the owner was no nearer a new building than another man who owned a vacant lot that represented virgin soil. Both owners had simply nothing, and were ready to begin to build the stately factory or mansion. Before the day of destruction the owner of the rookeries had something, but that something was all bad, and must be done away with before he could begin where his brother builder stood with spade surveying the untouched soil. And when some Gough recounts the events of his youth, and his conversion, and the days when he dwelt in an atmosphere of vulgarity and uncleanness, and finally comes to himself,

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he must first of all destroy the old animal habits, and clear the ground of evil companionships and sins. When that destructive work has been done, he is just where he was when, as a child, the foundations of character were to be laid and built up. Sometimes the farmer sweeps together the burdocks and thistles and poisonous weeds, and lifts the torch upon the obnoxious heap. It is one thing to clear the ground of weeds, and then it is another to plow the cleared ground, sow the seed, reap the harvests, and overflow the granary.

Now, it is just here that great confusion seems to have sprung up in many minds. Men say of Bunyan or Gough that they were instantly converted, and in an hour became new men. What they really mean is that in a dramatic moment, that sprang out of some great experience, they reversed the whole course of their life, assembled in thought their old passions and impulses, and in an hour, flaming with aspirations, lifted the torch to the old impulses, as men lift the torch upon a heap of weeds that has cursed the fruitful ground. Once the old sins have been destroyed, then begins the work of sowing the

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new growth of simplicity, temperance, service, sacrifice, truth, justice. For the Christian life represents growth and development. It is an educative process. The prodigal, dwelling amid husks and the swine, may fall upon his knees and cry, "Lord, descend and bring salvation!" but let him not think that God is an infinite clothier, who deals in character as a merchant deals in bales of wool, and that the great God cuts off a character suit and drops it down for men to put on. Men for themselves must lift the torch upon the old life to destroy it. Afterward, when they cry to God to come down and bring salvation, they are praying for the sun to shine on the seeds in the field. For salvation is not something done for man on the outside, it is a work done in man on the inside, and God is always coming to man. He besets the soul before and behind.

We dwell, as it were, in the very heart of God, as men dwell in the all-encompassing summer. But the sun, falling upon the stone and soil, is not the same in result. The sun falls upon the stone, and goes away leaving the stone unchanged. The sun falls on a seed, and it leaves the seed a sheaf. And the soul is a seed, stored with latent qualities that are



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divine, and God's spirit, falling thereupon, brings out these divine germs of love, and truth, and righteousness. Men do well, therefore, to talk of instantaneity and conversion, but this has to do with a negative and destructive work that is largely man's. Then begins the Christian life, which is positive, and represents a growth, development, practice, drill, patient, persevering toil, as they work out their own salvation. "For it is God who worketh in men to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Others there are who wait for some overmastering impulse and tide of feeling. They forget that it is not feeling but action and purpose that control destiny. The people of Martinique are now threatened with famine. Our government has sent a ship laden with food and medicine and physicians to Fort de France. Soon the committee will unload the flour and proffer bread to the victims of the earthquake. Now what if some youth, worn to a skeleton, should enter the hall where the food will be distributed and look at the bread offered, only to shake his head and turn away. What if he should say, "I do not feel any magical impulse that warrants my stretching

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out my hand to take a loaf. I do not understand how bread builds up the tissues, muscular and nervous. I do not know, philosophically, why a famine was permitted by a just God. I will not eat until I know why the wheat came in a ship." And what if the youth, torn by a thousand questions like these, should stand with tears streaming down his gaunt face, looking wistfully at the bread and refusing to stretch forth his hand and eat. Well, he would not be one whit more foolish than many a youth who to-day vexes himself with questions about God's decrees, about inspiration, about creeds, about science and faith, and refuses to partake of the bread that is offered. For reason, here is God, your Father and Friend, whose heart aches for you, and who never slumbers nor sleeps in his desire to win your love and confidence. Here is Christ, light to the dark, food for the hungry, fountain for the thirsty; Christ, with attitude of tenderness for little children, the Christ, poor and despoiled in his carpenter's shop, as an example for those who are friendless and despondent; the pitying Christ for the publican and outcast; Christ the teacher and

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master for the outcast and ignorant; Christ the shepherd for the lost sheep; the Christ of the sepulcher for those whose arms are empty and whose hearts are hungry for those whom they have lost. It is not necessary that men should know, it is only necessary that they should accept the Divine Saviour who offers help and succor. We do not have to understand creeds or state dogmas. A babe does not have to master medicine in order to be born. When the hungry youth has eaten he will be the better prepared for the work of analyzing the elements of a wheaten loaf. God is very good. Christ is tender beyond all our need. For all there is light, comfort, hope, recovery, and freely and without price. Wherefore, then, do you spend money for that which is not bread? Whosoever will may come. Act first and feeling will come afterwards. First obey, then analyze.

But some thoughtful youth will rise up and ask, What shall a man do with his past sins? How shall he straighten out his record? If he has a black sin in his past, how shall he become good friends with conscience and his God? Some time ago, in an American city, a bitter political enmity grew up between an

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editor and a banker. At length years of famine swept over the land, and in an hour of financial panic, when many banks were going down, the editor saw a chance to strike a deadly blow at his rival. Although he knew that his opponent's bank was financially sound and conservatively managed, the editor slipped a statement in the morning paper, saying that rumors were going around as to the solvency of an institution that hitherto had been considered safe, etc. Had that editor taken a pillow steeped in germs of a deadly plague, and made his way to some street corner in the midst of the city, and there midst a high wind shaken out the feathers to sow the city with germs of disease, he could not have done a more fiendish deed. At noon, when the editor left his office, he saw the crowd standing in front of the bank, and within a few days the institution was doomed. By reason of the public excitement and the stress upon other institutions, recovery was impossible, and everything the banker had was swept away.

Broken in spirit, and weakened in health by long excitement, at last the young banker fell on death. Several years later, remorse

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brought on sickness that cut short the editor's career. One day he sent for a friend, and told him that he was responsible for the banker's death, for the wrecked hopes of his children, who were toiling in offices instead of being in college, and also for the sorrow of the broken-hearted wife. And shortly afterwards he himself went on toward that great day of revelation when every secret deed shall be brought into judgment. What a problem was that when the editor asked, How can a man become reconciled to his record? Plainly repentance, confession, and restitution were impotent to do away with his sins. These acts could not bring the banker back to his desk, could not restore the institution to the injured stockholders, could not put these young daughters back in college, could not heal the widow's broken heart. Oh, what a world of unsuspected meaning there is in the statement "He bears our sins, He carries our sorrows, He was wounded for our transgressions." Not a blow falls upon any of God's children but it falls upon God's heart. What a shock came upon the moral interests of the city through the editor's sin. How assuredly was it calculated to discourage right-doing in

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young men. The columns of righteousness experienced a heavy blow in that single evil deed.

And it was the work of the unseen God to encourage the wavering hosts, to raise up a new leader for the soul, to bring forward in his providence new friends for the banker's children, to overrule their poverty and necessity for their own good. God assumed the responsibility of the man's evil deed, and set about the task of recovering society from the injury that had been wrought. In some way God bears man's sins. Plainly there is a world of meaning in Calvary that has not yet been fathomed. Yesterday's sins are a grievous weight; they are millstones about the neck. In the silence of the night, when conscience speaks, the story of sin seems written in letters of fire. And how shall a man become just before God? It is enough to know that God is love, that Christ's attitude toward the publican and prodigal reveals God's eternal attitude toward all transgressors. He casts our sins behind his back. Though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. God is just, and God is love. One red drop may "encarnadine the seas," but God's love is so

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vast that the sea itself is but a drop that falls upon the hollow of his hand, and the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. Reason cannot compass it. Dante said that the transgressor could escape his sin only by walking up red-hot marble stairs, but Christ answers that "God is love" and forgives, and as broken-hearted children, we fall into the everlasting arms. For "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In reality, Christianity is the science of full manhood and the universal, world-wide culture. The Christian is, indeed, one who has "oak and rock in his nature, and also vine and flower." He loves truth, color, form, music, and justice, with everything that appeals to man in the whole round of his thoughts, loves, and activities. The youth begins at nothing, yet Christianity would lead him on to full maturity. The child is full of roots, only the roots are ungrown. He is full of germ qualities, only these seeds are undeveloped. He is one great bundle of possibilities, but that which is potential must be made actual. And just as the sun draws near and bids the

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roots bestir themselves, bids the nuts burst asunder their hidden bunches, and calls all vegetable life from its sleeping and inert condition to the full bounty of the summer's growth, so Christ comes to the soul to find the youth full of high and divine powers, but with these powers bound and swathed and inert. In the ascetic ages, mistaking the story of Christ's career, men thought of Christianity as something that laid restraints upon the soul, lessened its activities, and dwarfed its powers. Under a mistaken idea men restrained all wit and humor; they put away laughter and out-breaking joy; they expelled all sweet song and companionships. Fearing lest the beautiful might lead them astray, they expelled the picture and statue from home and cathedral. Of two garments they took the ugliest one. They did not realize that if God gave the soul the sense of laughter or humor, it was just as divine as the sense of truth or justice. The ascetic would not have taken a watch to say that this wheel is all right, but this one is wrong, and yet they took that divine mechanism named the soul, filled up with faculties a thousandfold more wondrous than the mechanism of a watch, and tried to destroy this wheel



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and that escapement, and ended by wrecking the soul's happiness and the use for which it was made.

But released from the scholastic ideas, men have come back to Christ. They realize now that he is the one universal man—our only cosmopolitan. He loved birds and flowers. He loved the mountains and the moors and the lakes. He loved the wild poppy, with its splashes of fire midst the fields of wheat. He had an indescribable passion for the out-of-door life. There was no event so humble or small that it seemed to escape his scrutiny. The coin dropped by the woman in the market-place unrolled a great lesson before his sure reason. The shepherd who brought his sheep into the market-place, the sheik from the desert, the men changing the Jewish money into Roman, and charging a heavy exchange thereon, all the upheavals and struggles of peasants and princes, all the crises of the home, and the forum, and the synagogue, were events full of interest to him. And at last men are coming to realize that the Christian is the one not imprisoned but emancipated man. He develops his body, and leads the out-of-door life. With all senses open he

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looks out upon land and sea and sky. His reason turns to the libraries, and finds the truth. His taste turns towards the galleries, and he is enraptured with the beautiful. His conscience is attuned to justice, and he is interested in all laws and codes and reforms. Oft he is fascinated with sweet sound, and music surges through his heart with the majesty of the summer's storm. He weeps with those who weep, and laughs with those who laugh. He struggles with the aspiring youth. He bows his back to the burdens of the slave, the outcast, the broken-hearted. He rejoices in each victory for his kind. His heart is knitted in with the hopes of his fellows. He exults in each moral achievement for his race, and oft he looks forward to the stars and beyond them to the hour of revelation when he shall understand that which is now hidden. Who shall describe the true Christian? No pen can describe him, and no poet can paint his god-like brow, for a complete Christian has never yet been seen upon our earth.

Unconsciously one of the old English essayists of the school of Addison described him as one who would arrive only with the Golden Age. A finished patrician gentleman, he

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thought, will be the crowning fruit of our earth. “By a fine gentleman, I mean a man completely qualified for the service, and good for the ornament and delight of society. When I consider the frame of mind peculiar to such an one, I suppose it graced with all the dignity and elevation of spirit that the human nature is capable of. To this I would have joined a clear understanding, a reason free from prejudice, a steady judgment, and an extensive knowledge. When I think of the heart of a gentleman, I imagine it firm and intrepid, void of all inordinate passions, and full of tenderness, compassion, and benevolence. When I view the gentleman with regard to his manners, methinks I see him modest without bashfulness, frank and affectionate without impertinence, obliging and complacent without servility, cheerful and in good humor without noise. But these qualities are not easily obtained. A finished gentleman is perhaps the most uncommon of all the great characters in life. Besides the endowments with which this distinguished man is to be born, he must run through a long series of education. Before he makes his appearance and shines in the world, he must be principled

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in religion and instructed in all the moral virtues, and led through the whole course of the polite arts and sciences. He should be no stranger to courts and to camps. He must travel to open his mind, to enlarge his heart, to learn the policies and interests of foreign states, as well as to fashion and polish himself, and to get rid of national prejudices, of which every country has its share."

Now, accepting this definition of a patrician gentleman, where will you find it? As men go toward likeness to Jesus Christ, they go toward this ideal of manhood, for Jesus Christ was indeed the only perfect gentleman that ever trod our earth.

From time to time men arise who publish their unbelief in Christianity. Each generation indeed has its own arch-infidel. Some Julian, some Rousseau, some Paine, announces his unbelief in Christianity. But as a matter of fact there has never been an infidel to the Christian life. Men have refused belief to the sacraments, to creeds, to popes, to religious teachers, to churches, but no one has ever been infidel toward the Christian life. One man is infidel to the creed, but this is unbelief toward a philosophy. Another is infidel

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toward the church—this is unbelief toward an organization. One is infidel toward the Bible, but this represents want of belief in the statements of some man named Moses or Paul. But who has been infidel toward Christianity? “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report.” Who is there who denies and despises and derides these high and godlike qualities? “Whatsoever things are true.” No man denies the importance of truth. Once truth is fully revealed, like that of Newton or Milton or Shakespeare, men hang over the pages as they hang above a casket filled with precious jewels. And when the truth is painted, how do the multitudes crowd about the canvas!

When the truth is spoken by some great orator, how do men crowd about him who brings that truth to bear upon conduct and character. And the Christian is one who loves the truth; wants all the facts in the case; is asking what is social truth, and artistic truth and spiritual truth; and then follows that truth as the needle follows the pole. “Whatsoever things are honest.” A rugged virtue, is honesty, but it is as essential to manhood as

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strength is essential to an oak, as hardness is essential to a block of granite. And what higher praise can you bestow upon some Lincoln than to say he was an honest man. What revelation in the proverb, "An honest man is the noblest work of God." The honest man never undertakes a truth for his own advantage, never overstates it in his own interest. He swears to his own hurt, and changes not. And when such a truth lover and truth speaker stands forth fully revealed, the whole world rises up in admiration and approval of such a character and career.

"Whatsoever things are just." There has never been a man who was infidel toward justice. The very foundations of state and commerce are fixed thereon. In the innermost chamber of the Pyramids the Egyptian king fixed standards of measurement, that justice might be meted out. One cavity represents, for example, a measure for oil or wine; another represents the measure for wheat; and another gives the unit of weight for a bale of wool or silk. These standards cannot be tampered with. Lying weights and measures became impossible, and this emphasis of the importance of a just standard, witnessed to by

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the Pyramids, is but one of a thousand testimonies to the importance of justice.

“Whatsoever things are pure.” Who has ever been infidel to purity? What manner of man would he be who disliked the newly blown rose, the dewdrops making the grass to sparkle with diamond fire, the purity that lies upon the face of the sweet babe in the cradle, the purity of the young bride’s face, the purity of the spotless snow that rejoices the mountains as with the garments of God. Not that bloom that lies over the fruit is so alluring as the soft bloom of innocence and purity that lies upon the brow of youth and maiden, whose lives are unstained with sin, and whose pure hearts see God.

“Whatsoever things are lovely.” Whoever was infidel to loveliness, whether physical or moral? The friend has some lovely qualities, the hero some admirable traits, the reformer or martyr some qualities that evoke praise, but your one image of loveliness perchance is your mother, long since dead, patient with your faults, tender when others condemned, forgiving where others were bitter, hopeful even in your wanderings, when all others have despaired, and at last her love drew you back

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to a right life and to God. How in memory her face shines like the face of an angel of God, and he who would disbelieve in whatsoever things were lovely in her life, would seem to you below the image of a beast or demon. Infidelity to loveliness becomes unthinkable for the sound intellect.

And what more shall one say of those things that are of good report, and that make for virtue and for praise, save that these also represent the essential elements of the Christian life. Let orators, therefore, publish their unbelief in certain statements in the Bible, and the creeds, and the priests, and the churches. These are not Christianity. No infidel to Christianity has ever stood upon the face of our earth. Yet a thousand men, unable to distinguish between the clothes and the living soul, have been infidel to the costumer's accidents, but all who are true men, must, in the nature of the case, believe in the Christian life, as it is represented by Christ, and set forth in his law of love.

What a task is this that the great God hath undertaken, to make men Christians, and the disciples of his Son. Not those transformations in nature are more wonderful. Great is



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the power of summer, that changes the seed into a golden sheaf. Marvelous indeed that force that leads the tiny seed into the dimensions of the giant trees of California. How shall we sufficiently praise those artists who can change a canvas, dead and inert, into a picture with faces glorious as the angels of God. Men there are blessed with such genius ✓ that they can cause a lump of mud to stand forth with the lines of a vase, or with a few strokes of the chisel let an angel out of the block of marble. And yet the marvel of time is that sublime, secret stirring of the divine life in the soul, and the leading of that new and noble impulse forward until it has cleansed the whole man, harmonized all his faculties, refined, clarified, and sweetened the whole body, mind, and heart. ✓ And nothing short of this is the task that Christ the schoolmaster hath set before himself. The whole earth is, as it were, God's school. Joys, sorrows, defeats, and victories are under-teachers under that divine master who bids us all become pupils. All are under his tutelage. The earth itself is a kind of cathedral floor, and the sky a glorious ceiling, and events are tasks, and hard questions are problems for our develop-

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ment, and troubles are tests of fidelity to conviction and duty.

And no matter how far the earthly pilgrim wanders from the path, God sends his angels of recovery out to win the wanderer back from the thorns and thickets, the bog and slough. Each night simply marks an epoch, each morning begins a new march. Influences may be silent and secret, but they are real. Not the stroke of the earthquake is so powerful as the stroke of Christ's truth falling upon man's hard heart. Not the thunder of the storm is so entreating as his still small voice, calling men away from selfishness and sin towards obedience and duty. And once the man is redeemed and made Christian and ripe and mature, who shall describe the beauty of this divine work. If scientists could change mud to gold, or pebbles to diamonds, it would be as nothing compared to this transformation of man from the power of sin and Satan into the light and beauty of the kingdom of God. And once such a transformation has been wrought, the whole earth ought to wake, and every string of heaven quiver with the out-blown joy. For there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over

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ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. Oh! it is a wonderful thing to be conscious of an abiding impulse to follow Christ in thought, disposition, and life. Happy are they who have built upon his foundation and have found him a guide, counselor, a schoolmaster, a friend. And having followed him here below, when at last the iron gate of life closes behind us, and the golden gate of death swings open before, and we enter the company of the noble and the great garnered from all the ages, and by reason of some small deed to Christ's little ones are crowned, then every generous heart will lift the crown placed upon the brow by the pierced hand, and everything that is finest in thought and purest in feeling will rise up to acclaim Christ as Lord and Master, and to place the crown before his feet, while we confess that not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name be all the praise of our salvation.



THE OBSTACLES AND EXCUSES THAT STAND  
HESITANT BEFORE THE THRESHOLD  
OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

# The Christian Life.

I the Aim of the Christian Life.

II. The Method .. ..

III. The Reward .. ..

## CHAPTER II.

### THE OBSTACLES AND EXCUSES THAT STAND HESITANT BEFORE THE THRESH- OLD OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Back to Christ is the watchword of the new scholarship. Thoughtful men are asking for Christ's conception of what it is to be a Christian. In clear and simple terms he has stated the aim of the Christian life, the method of the Christian life, and the reward of that life. The aim of the Christian life is the development of a large, ample, and sound manhood. The method of the Christian life is growth by yoke-bearing and liberty by obedience to laws, Christ himself being the pattern of obedience. The reward of the Christian life is such volume and weight of manhood as to make the yoke carried seem to have the feather's lightness, and the burden of obedience to give soul-rest and happiness. In a word, Christ opens a school, he himself is to be the master, men are to be his pupils; the object of the school is the growth of manhood, the motive power is love, the pattern



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is the Master himself, and this the prize—a character fashioned after a divine standard.

“Come unto me; learn! I will give rest!”

Oh, what an overture was that! Little wonder that it evoked a rapture of enthusiasm

in all hearers. Man has many hungers, but his earliest, latest, and deepest hunger is his desire to make the most possible of himself.

7. Consider that the soul begins at nothing, the mere seed of manhood. Consider that most men end their career feeble in emotion, slender of conscience and moral sentiment.

Consider that even the noblest specimens of men are full of faults and will not bear close scrutiny. A study of men is like a study of

the earth, full of ore undug, full of mines not yet uncovered, the April soil being full of un-  
grown seeds. And to these men of starved and pinched souls Christ offers the secret of full manhood. What a scene was that!

There the people, famished with hunger, clothed with rags, ground under the heel of foreign soldiers, restless, full of sedition, plotting the destruction of their Roman oppressors; and in their midst this divine teacher calling these people with their pinched, scant resources, to full happiness and manhood—the

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Christ himself clothed with such radiancy of beauty and power that the mere waving of his hand caused men to fall to the ground, for his was more than the power of an Apollo; clothed with such eloquence of speech that he held all men's hearts, as it were, in his hand; clothed with such beauty of character as that even publicans and thieves felt his all-alluring fascination. And to officers and slaves, to the ruler and the thief and publican, to bond and free, and rich and poor, and high and low, together, he sent out this matchless invitation, "Come unto me; learn in my school; for your tumult and agitation I will give you rest."

If there is any one thing above all things else that men want it is rest. Nevertheless, the history of man's life is a history of agitation that is endless. In reviewing its career we can only say that the soul is like the dove that Noah sent forth, and lo! it returned, having found no place of rest for the tired wings. Every noble youth now going forth to make his fortune at last returns, having found that his ambition and anxieties make him like unto the waves of the sea, driven with the wind, tossed and subject to endless

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upheaval. Even of the most successful men we must say that they are aspirants who, in stooping down to drink, have found the spring receding from the cup; or, stretching their hands upward find the bough has sprung away from their grasp. There are indeed a few happy and fortunate souls who seem to have had all the good things of life; but perhaps even their happiness is in part a seeming. Has your eye ever been filled with seeing? You have traveled far and looked upon the most beautiful objects of art, architecture, and color; yet the more you see the more you want to see. Can the ear ever be filled with hearing? Though you have heard earth's most eloquent orators, and listened to our supremest singers, and have been charmed a thousand times by a lover's or a mother's voice, the more sweetness the ear hears the more it wishes to hear. Have you ever grown weary of loving? You have your friends—you have bound them to you with bands of steel, but the more you love, the more you want to love. This was Solomon's epitaph for the tomb of even the happiest and most successful among men: "I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I gathered silver and

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gold; I was great, and also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; but behold, there was no rest under the sun."

This wise king does not mean that wealth is not useful, but that using it aright means great care and responsibility. He is not declaiming against wisdom; he rather asserts that if wisdom brings opportunity it brings an obligation also. He is not belittling the power of the statesman; he is only asserting that he who finds himself lifted to the throne of influence by the suffrage of the people, soon discovers that he is responsible to the people for the righting of their wrongs. Indeed, the higher a man climbs, the wider his outlook, the purer and whiter his ideals, the greater his anxieties and his cares. The peasant may sleep the sleep of childhood; not the hero, nor the patriot, nor the statesman. These all must toss upon the couch. And to man, fulfilling such a career, does there come one who offers rest? Is there one who can point out a path that leads to a chamber of peace?

What? Rest in such a world! What house is there that has not some shadow? Here is a home where dwells one overtaken by mis-

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fortune and bankruptcy, and becomes an object of cruel criticism! Into this home hath come the news of a son fallen and crushed by the fall. From this home there hath gone the little child, and lo, all is desolate. In this house dwells a mother whose daughter went forth to find a garden, and lo, she dwells in a desert. There, too, are poor in their huts, and the unfortunate in their dungeons, and the elect who wander in the wilderness, the burdened, the bankrupt, and heart hungry, the weary, and lo, unto all comes this invitation, vibrating through the air, "Come unto me, there is a chamber of rest. Though your feet be on the earth and your body know tumult, the soul may know tranquillity and peace." Ah, sweetest words that ever fell o'er heaven's battlements. Invitation divine, that, God be thanked, hath never been withdrawn from needy men. And yet men stood hesitant. Hungry, they pushed aside the proffered bread. Heart-broken, refused the hand that offered healing and comfort. How significant these words, "And the people went away. For they were offended in him."

I. Many stand upon the threshold of the Christian life, and will not cross the line be-

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cause they are unwilling to assume its obligations. Their rule of life is to avoid all unnecessary responsibility. They do not wish to be fettered or trammled. They feel a little freer outside of the church. Then if they make a misstep no one is injured but themselves. What! Avoid responsibility by refusing to confess it? This is a singular misapprehension! No man adds to his obligations by joining a Christian church. No man escapes them by refusing allegiance. The obligation to discipleship is based upon the moral constitution of man. The law of the pure heart, the duty to hunger and thirst after righteousness, the sin of evil thoughts and lying words, the murderous hand, did not begin to be when Christ affirmed them. From the beginning of time it has been wrong to steal and kill. Being so, Christ recognized this eternal wrong. The physician does not create the laws of health. There being certain organs in the body, gluttony and drunkenness being injurious to these organs the physician warns against excess and incites to moderation and care. Do you think that when you have broken the laws of nerve and digestion and sleep and go down

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with nervous prostration, and reason itself trembles upon the throne, you can call in the physician and say, "What do these twinges and aches mean? I have never joined a health society. I have never promised to obey the laws of hygiene. I refrained therefrom that I might have more liberty. I do not wish to trammel myself by pledging obedience to the laws that forbid an occasional excess in eating and drinking and passion."

You avoid no obligation to obey the laws of the body by declining to recognize your duty; you increase your obligation not one whit by studying books of health or joining a society for the study and promotion of your physical well-being. Here are two boys: one goes to school and studies hard to make himself a scholar; the other hates his book and plays truant. At thirty years of age the boy who refused the obligations to study is discharged by his employer for grievous ignorance displayed in his misspelling and bad grammar. The indignant clerk exclaims, "Why, I ought not to be held to the law of correct spelling. I never joined a school or promised to spell right. Wishing to lead a free life, I declined all these foolish promises and responsibilities."



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The youth who plays truant is as much bound by the laws of grammar and logic as the one who strives to obey these laws. He who refuses to study and obey the law of arithmetic will soon drop out of trade and commerce. He who refuses to study and obey the law of fire, and wind, and water, and acids will soon suffer irreparable wreckage of the body. He who refuses to study and obey the laws of truth, and friendship, and good citizenship will soon have no place in decent society. The artist who wishes to avoid the obligations to paint with harmonious colors, by never joining an art school and studying under a great master, has no place among those who love supreme beauty. Even the minister himself is under no more obligation to lead a Christian life than the man who never opens his Bible, who never crosses the threshold of a church. The obligation to follow Jesus Christ, to study in his school of character and pursue the higher manhood, is based upon the fact that men are men, and not that they are moral teachers, or merchants, or lawyers, or believers, or worldlings. Once for all, therefore, let us end this superficial thought, that we have more license and freedom by remain-

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ing outside of the church instead of joining Christ's school and studying Christ's method of making the most of one's self.

2. Other hesitant ones stand upon the threshold because of a misconception regarding pleasure. They think that the Christian life involves giving up many of life's best things, and the taking on of many pains and denials. All these are under the influence of the ascetic ideals. They are thinking of Simon Stylites, climbing his pillar in the desert. They are influenced by the thought of Francis of Assisi, wearing rags, eating crusts, rolling himself in the dust, and sleeping on a slab of stone. They remember Pascal, who was disturbed lest he loved his sister too much. Something of the Puritan strain is in them. They are influenced by their fathers, who looked askance upon amusements, hesitated lest laughter, wit, and humor might not work softness and enervate character. Heroic men, these Puritans; men of oak and granite. Strong enough to hew away the excesses, and destroy the political wrongs of feudal ages, but narrow men! The pattern of the Christian life is not the ancient or the modern ascetic. The pattern is Jesus

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Christ. What characteristic of Christ so striking as his all-rounded manhood. He was truly the planetary man. His was indeed the cosmic culture. Nothing that concerned his fellows was foreign to him.

He loved nature, the grass, the wild poppy, and watched the flight of birds. He loved the mountain-top, and the wind-swept moors, and standing on the Mount of Olives studied the silent stars, and questioned what went on behind those stars and beyond them. He loved the home and lent sanctity, by his presence, to the marriage tie. He loved the poor and weak, and his cup of cold water was itself a spring of innumerable reforms to slave, and serf, and prisoner. His emphasis of childhood stands back of all schools, colleges, and universities. His influence upon the fine arts appears in a single fact that the masterpieces of painting have him as a subject, the masterpieces of music breathe his spirit and chant his praise, and the masterpieces of architecture were erected for his worship. And as men go toward ideal discipleship they go toward enthusiasm for geology, astronomy, and every science. Toward the love of poem and song and drama, and every form of

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literature. Toward enthusiasm for the library, and gallery, and lecture-hall. Toward interest in politics, and reform, and the ideal commonwealth.

*Smile*  
You say that Jesus Christ represented sorrow only; that he wept, but never was seen to smile! What right have you to make such a statement? His was the happiest life that our earth has ever known. Think you that the blind man whom he healed knew transports of joy, while the healer himself had no part in that delight? Think you he restored the sick to health, but had no part in the deep exultation of these transformed homes? Did he save the publican, and the prodigal, and the harlot, and the thief, recover their hope and redeem their souls from death, and experience no quickening of the pulses that beat in happiness? One of the sentences that should be wiped from the pages of history is that which says that Jesus often wept, but was never seen to smile. And if you who stand hesitant on the threshold of the Christian life become his disciples, and go toward likeness to your Master, you will go toward that form of culture that will make you familiar with all the best that has been done, and thought, and said

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in this great world. Every pleasure is ours. All breadth of sympathy, and every form of art, and nature, and music. All these are ours, because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. The narrow man is the man who does not understand Christ's spirit, nor imitate his life. What shall we say, then, of these who object that if they enter upon the Christian life they must give up many pleasures and many joys? What if I should ask a beggar in his rags, with his moldy crust for bread, to enter a mansion and become the owner of palace and vast estate? And what if the beggar, with his thin blue lips and gaunt face should stand hesitant upon the threshold of the great mansion, and looking down the driveway should shake his head wistfully and say, "Oh, but I would have to give up the pleasures of begging bread from house to house, and the delights of sleeping in a garret." Some things the disciple does give up. The pleasures of sin; for gluttony, and ill-temper, and lording it over one's fellows, for example, are real pleasures. But in losing the low form of pleasure the disciple gains a thousand new and higher ones.

Oh, marvelous experience! This divine life

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that, beginning so simply, unfolds into a thousand unanticipated forms of joy and manhood! The kingdom of Christian experience is like a man who bought a field for farming, and going forth to sow his seed, gathered a harvest a hundredfold, and when he had filled his barns with sheaves from above the ground, found gold and silver in the soil. The kingdom of heaven overtakes us with surprises and unanticipated good fortune. Recently I was in the South lecturing. There a man told me of a strange incident. One cold morning last winter a little boy found the track of a rabbit in the snow. Following the dog, the boy soon tracked the rabbit to a hole. Digging long, the child at last tired of his task, and knew bitter disappointment. But in tearing up the soil, the boy and the dog unearthed some bits of shining ore, which the child carried away in his pocket. One evening, several days later, the father pushed his spectacles up, dropped his paper, and watched his boy, who was playing with some pieces of stone and ore. Something in the glint caught the farmer's eye. Stooping down he picked up the ore and sat long looking at it. The longer he looked, the more he became interested. After a while

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he arose and took down a volume from his encyclopedia. The next morning the farmer drove to the village and consulted with his banker and the school teacher. The next day the professor of mineralogy from the state university arrived at the farmer's house. When a month had passed by the pieces of zinc and lead that the boy and his dog had dugged up had culminated in a check that represented fifty times the former value of that farm.

But what about the boy? Oh, this boy still cried whenever he thought of the rabbit. He could not understand that in losing the little thing he had gained what was ten thousand times more important, the released mortgage, happy parents, and the possibility of education, a good start in life, travel, influence over his fellows. All he could think about was that he had to give up that form of pleasure called tearing to pieces a little four-footed animal. And men are only boys grown tall. They lose certain little and low delights, indeed, in entering upon the Christian life, but what forms of joy divine they gain. What happiness must be his who does Christ's work in Christ's way. What volume of character

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belongs to him who is a walking, living, animated edition of the beatitudes! God's greatest gift to a community is the gift of a man who is indeed a disciple of Jesus Christ; he alone can sweeten and refine an entire community. Strange, passing strange, that men do not understand that the path of discipleship is the path that leads to the very fountain of joy and happiness.

“Is it my duty to avow myself openly a disciple of Jesus Christ if I conscientiously feel that I am not worthy to be so ranked and recognized?”

This question is influential, for the most part secretly, with many who earnestly desire to live the higher life, to realize their own best capacities, to serve their fellow-men most effectively, and who are willing to accept the teaching and the help of Jesus Christ. Their hesitation is not selfish or ignoble. They are sincerely afraid that they might, by their conduct as Christians, injure the cause they really love. To those who offer this consideration merely as a pretext or excuse for not doing what they know they ought to do, no answer will be given here. But to the rest, it should be said that a Christian church ought not to



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be more severe than its Master in requiring attainment from beginners. What he required, and all that he required, was sincerity and thoroughness of purpose. If he could forgive and restore Peter, after Peter had shown himself, under a sudden surprise of temptation, a liar and a coward, and had even relapsed into his old habits, cursing and swearing like a vulgar fisherman, is he not ready, and are his churches not bound in his name, to forgive and restore his stumbling and wandering disciples?

As to the disrepute into which the behavior of Christians may bring Christianity, let it be said, once for all, that this consideration was worn out long ago. It was the stereotyped charge against the Saviour himself, that he included among his disciples so many sinners. It has been the characteristic of Christian churches ever since, that their members, being human, have not been worthy examples of the life they were professedly trying to live. But that was his express choice. He came to call "not the righteous, but sinners." And he counted nothing hopeless save hypocrisy.

Now, they who shirk from openly following him lest they be not worthy, if they be sincere,

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must hope that some day they will have made themselves worthy and will be free to avow their allegiance without misgivings. To such let it be said that Jesus Christ promised to the churches of his disciples the spirit of guidance, comfort, and inspiration, and his own perpetual presence. Do they really think they can make themselves "good enough" with greater ease or certainty by declining the help thus promised through the Christian brotherhood? Do they not realize that if they sincerely purpose to follow and serve Christ they will need all the help they can get through the channels he has appointed? And will the influence of an open stand on his side and among his people be good or bad? Is there anything about church membership that tends to make a man relapse into old unworthy ways?

Some there are who rail against Christianity by reason of the want of consistency among its members. They insist that the church has stood for ignorance, narrowness, bigotry, and cruelty. One of their favorite amusements is the rehearsing the story of the popes who have persecuted scholars. They remind us that one pope imprisoned Galileo, and another killed Bruno; that Calvin burned Servetus,

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that Torquemada organized the Inquisition. Now and then one of these men will spend two hours detailing the shrieks and groans and woes of blazing heretics to the indescribable delight of two thousand auditors, each of whom has paid two dollars for listening to the eloquent infidel. How the great infidel rejoiced over Calvin's cruelty to Servetus; that sacrifice was better than a gold mine; and the agonies of Torquemada's victims were worth, as he determined, many thousands of dollars. The Inquisition is a great money maker for eloquent unbelievers. These all insist that the emblem of the church is the fagot, the thumb-screw, and the heresy trial. Influenced by that statement many avoid the Christian life.

We freely grant that Peter cursed, and with vulgar oaths denied his Master. Sorrowfully we confess that Judas was a contemptible hypocrite. We grant that in the time of Galileo scheming and cunning politicians were attracted by the power and wealth of the church to get themselves elected cardinals; threatened Galileo and threatened a thousand other Christian men who protested against the lewdness and cruelty of pope and cardi-

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nal. We confess, too, that some ecclesiastics were simply an organized syllogism, an animated argument, bloodless as a stone, with an intellect that worked like a cold logic engine; and about as lovable as a two-edged sword. But if one of these men did play the traitor like Peter, if he was intellectually so proud and so determined to have his own way that he would not simply expel as a heretic one who did not think as he thought, but would burn him at the stake, has his colossal egotism that has wrecked the church, as every heresy hunter does—does that recreancy make right your refusal to imitate Jesus Christ?

You will not join a church because of inconsistent church members! Consistency, then, is the word you wish to emphasize. Very well. Here is the world of trade and commerce. To-morrow, merchants will adulterate their goods, traders will tamper with their weights, milkmen will water their milk, drapers will sell cotton for silk, clerks will steal money from the bank, and the whole kingdom of trade stand for hypocrisies and lies. Since you do not care to associate with hypocrites, withdraw yourself from business, and pledge yourself never again to enter the kingdom of

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commerce. If inconsistent members keep you out of the church, why do not inconsistent members keep you out of business? Here is the kingdom of law. To-morrow lawyers will be tricksters. They will suborn witnesses. They will conceal evidence. They will deal in subterfuges. But because some lawyers are unprofessional, will that compel you to stand aloof from the study of jurisprudence? Here is the kingdom of love and marriage. To-morrow some man will play false to his marriage vow, and some woman will profane the holiest sanctities, and those who have solemnly pledged themselves to the law of love will stand forth clothed with hypocrisy as with a garment. But does their inconsistency mean that you can never found your home, and that you can never stand at a marriage altar, and never swear fealty in the name of an eternal friendship? Why, there are spots on the sun, but we need the sun for harvest. To be consistent, you must give up the Venus de Milo, because there is a flaw in the marble. We must pull down the Parthenon, because there are black stains on the columns. Now, something is wrong in the man who refuses allegiance to the church because of inconsist-

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ency, but turns around and gives allegiance to a hundred other institutions, in the very face of greater inconsistencies.

The time has gone forever for men to plead the bigotry and bad lives of the unworthy disciples of a Master who confessedly is worthy. Peter and Judas were not Christian, and misrepresented their Master. But in that hour of misrepresentation they ceased to be disciples, and became hypocrites. Let all those who dislike hypocrisy leave immediately the company of Judas, and Peter with his denial, and join the ranks of the other ten. We grant that there are men outside of the church who are better than some in the church. Now and then a youth appears in the realm of art who is blessed with such native genius that instinctively he understands the laws of drawing and perspective, and the laws of harmonious color. And side by side with him is another youth who for years has been in the school under a great artist master, and after long drill can scarcely equal his brother who is self taught. But shall this gifted youth who has received so much from his parents and his God declaim against his father, or despise the school of art?

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There are many poor pupils in schools and colleges, but when you find some youth who is far from being the ideal scholar, do not rail against the college and the university. The poorer the scholar, the more necessary the maintenance of the school in which he studies. Not otherwise, if men in the church are sinful, and weak, and full of error, it is the more necessary to strengthen the church, that manhood later may be strengthened. Unconsciously, he who urges the inconsistency of Christians, and rails against their errors, has forged a weapon that turns against himself.

How ungenerous are all these excuses, as well as how wicked! We live in God's world. He hath fitted up this world house as no prince hath ever fitted up the halls of a palace. We breathe his air, are warmed by his summers, we feed upon his harvests, we are pilgrims who stoop and drink at his fountains. The angel of his providence goes before us to prepare life's way; the angel of his mercy follows after us to recover us from our transgressions. And how shall men meet such overflowing generosity save with instant obedience? What mark across the page of memory so black as the mark of ingratitude?

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How unworthy those who trade upon the instincts of the generous. The tramp uses great subtlety in deceit. He hides his overcoat in the hedge, tears a rent in the garment, sprinkles a little red pepper on his handkerchief, then, standing upon your threshold, he begins: "Misfortune has overwhelmed me. For weeks I have been in a hospital and now I am turned out on the street. I have no money and no clothes. All last night I prayed for direction, and God has sent me to your house. I have never begged before. And I am here, casting myself on your generosity." Now, you know the man's voice rings false. You are almost sure that you smell whisky on his breath. You know that when you go upstairs your wife will tell you that for the hundredth time you have been deceived. But unwilling to run the risk of turning away one really in trouble, you give. Then going out into the street, you find the man putting on the coat he had hidden, and with his companion he trudges to the saloon, and on the way you overhear them gloating over their success in "working" a benefactor.

Ah, how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child! What if you



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are trading on God's generosity? What if you are thinking of getting all the good out of the life that now is, and banking on things turning out all right in another world? What if you say, "Ah, he will be gentle with his prodigal son?" What subterfuges! What artful evasions! How have you made merchandise of God's generosity! Surely every consideration that makes for honor asks you to fling away these selfish motives. Put down the animal within and give ear to the angel that stands calling you upward toward Christ and God. Every hour in life is a critical hour, and every hour when you stand hesitant midway between the past and the future is an hour big with destiny. There are moments in a campaign when everything depends upon a single decision of a general. And the greatest battlefield in history is the battle for the city of man's soul, and the moment has now come for men who have long stood hesitant, halting between two opinions, to decide. Oh, be wise. Desire, and also choose. In this hour dedicate the whole life to loyal obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ, and being wise for your own manhood in the life that now is, be wise also with that eternal life.



MAN'S NEED, AND GOD'S LOVE.



## CHAPTER III.

### MAN'S NEED, AND GOD'S LOVE.

All wise men will confess that in one respect Christ is absolutely unique among the world teachers. If the other philosophers of his age despise the common people, Jesus had one overwhelming passion—his enthusiasm for the poor and weak. In his recognition of the sacred rights of the individual, he stripped the king of his purple and the peasant of his rags. Laying aside all outer trappings, he found the test of the value of the soul in the soul's native worth. Above the tomb of Dives and Lazarus alike, he writes a single legend, "Made in the image of God." Prior to his coming, society concentrated its admiration upon the few gifted sons of good fortune, made pre-eminent by genius, or rank, or dazzling success, or military valor. These great ones of earth overshadowed the people and starved them, just as a single tree shades the humbler vegetable growths, robbing them at once of all life-giving sunshine and of the richness of the soil. How great was the

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chasm between Christ and the other teachers appears from the writings of Horace, who is perhaps the best example of the gentleman of the old Roman school. That poet began one of his best known songs with the words, "I hate the vulgar crowd, and hold them at a distance." Even so great an idealist as the author of the "Republic" tells us frankly that he despised the common people, and thought them chiefly useful to stand up and serve as targets at which the enemy might shoot. Indeed, we may sum up the story of the sorrows of the poor in that far-off age by saying: the philosophers despised the masses and spoke of them with open contempt; the generals feared the masses and bribed them with games and gifts of wheat; while the emperors hated the masses, and when they dared, massacred them by thousands.

But no words can describe Christ's enthusiasm for God's children, for whom he had fitted up a world so beautiful as this. Standing upon the corner of the street, he watched the multitude go surging by, clothed in rags, faces wan and gaunt, seared with passion and sin, broken-hearted and disappointed; and watching, his heart was moved with compassion,

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and he stretched out hands of loving help. Stooping, he took the little child in his arms, and in that moment his love hung above the babe as once the star hung above his own manger. With eyes filled with all-comprehending and all-comforting love, he sought for the prodigal who had made his life a waste and a desolation as others seek for a diamond lost in the rubbish. With infinite hope and winsome love he gazed upon the publican and the prodigal, as some miner stands in the gorge that is rich with treasures of gold that lie just beneath the surface. And the common people owe their rise in happiness chiefly to his attitude, teachings, and influence. When Christ placed Lazarus and Dives upon an equal plane, he set thrones tottering and tyrants trembling. That parable also gave the impulse to all the institutions that make for the glorification of the people; it gave to Robert Burns his poem, "Man's a Man for a' That." Indeed, in that single parable there is the essence of ten thousand declarations of independence, for free institutions take their rise in this fact—Christ emphasized individual worth and liberty as the beginnings of happiness and progress.

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But with Christ it was not enough to speak kindly of publicans and sinners. Unlike the politicians, he did not flatter men that later he might use them. He was not a tyrant who praised those whom he afterward spoiled. Indeed, all his days fairly effulge with deeds that publish the sincerity of his kindly words. He bore himself toward the poor and weak with all the affection of a mother, or friend, or lover, and poured forth his inspiring words and wonder deeds in patient, passionate profusion. In his eager longing to help men, he was always with them, and went every whither, having no fear of impairing his dignity. Had he lived in our day, he would have been found in great political gatherings, in the maelstroms of trade, and in all resorts of amusement, ambition, and wisdom. He mingled freely with all classes of people, the poor and the criminal as well as the rich and honored. At last even the scribes confessed that his latest and deepest thought was one of anxious solicitude for those who had wandered from the path of obedience. One dramatic event interprets his sense of the value of man's soul. It happened that he was invited to a great house, where dwelt one of the richest men of the day.



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It was the year of public favor. This young teacher was being talked about everywhere, and the rich man desired to honor himself by entertaining Jesus. His fame was such that he could not be hid, and so a great crowd followed him through the streets to the home of his host. In that warm clime, the banqueting-hall was generally open on every side. Instead of sitting about a board, as in our day, the couches were arranged around a central table, and each guest half reclined during the banquet.

The customs of that time seem peculiar to us. In Europe the young German students testify their devotion to a great professor by kissing him. But in that era a disciple manifested his devotion to his master by kneeling at the foot of his couch and embracing the feet of the noble teacher. During the progress of the banquet it happened that a woman that was a sinner brushed through the onlookers, and kneeling at the foot of his couch, embraced Christ's feet, gathered them into her arms, and when, despite her blinded eyes, she saw that she had soiled his person with her tears, she wiped the tears away with her hair. Again and again, in other days, she had

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lingered upon the outskirts of the crowd, and listened to Christ's words of hope and comfort. Listening, something had stirred within her. She knew other men, and had only curses for them. If her every curse had become a coal of fire, not a man present but would have been scarred and seared with fiery coals. She knew men, rabbis, rulers, Pharisees, merchants, alike, knew their skill in spinning snares out of silken threads; knew how a man could use his physical beauty, his gold, his speech, his lying allurements, to net the feet of the unwary. Then, taken herself in the snare, she remembered how she had wakened from her dream to find the earth iron, the heavens brass, and her beauty ashes. Alas for those who buy and sell all the sweet sanctities of love. For them the day itself is darkness, and the night an abyss of corruption. But while she had listened to this strange teacher something within her softened.

It was as if his hand had touched a hidden spring, revealing an inner sanctuary of sweetness, unknown even to the girl herself. Soiled without, she wakened up to find that there had always been an inner room kept pure and true. And hope, so long dead, stirred, and

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sprang up anew. Recalling other days, she remembered her beauteous mother and the days of her innocence, when her heart was as white as the clouds that float through the air. In that hour, when hope flamed up, love, too, softened and took the place of hate, and in the abandon of gratitude, conscious of his forgiveness, she broke through the crowd, threw herself at the foot of his couch, made a veil of the silken masses of her hair, and burst into a flood of tears that cleansed as well as refined. Oh, what an event was that! Little wonder that the silence was so deep that men could hear their hearts beat. But the moment was critical for Jesus. What black suspicions arose in the minds of evil men, as they lifted questioning eyes, as if to say, "So this teacher and this woman have met before!" Was ever man great enough to meet such an emergency and rise above it? Surely this event will test the resources even of one who is divine! Oh, marvel of marvels! that without exertion this divine teacher not only rose above the event, but made it the occasion of one of the rarest, deepest, sweetest portrayals of God's all-embracing sympathy that our world has ever known.

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While men were saying, "Can he extricate himself?" Jesus said unto his host, "Simon, there was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed him five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" Then he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman hath kissed my feet. Therefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. And he said unto the woman, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace." What a drama is here! It has been described by all the preachers and historians of the life of Christ, but told over and over, it is ever new. What hope for men in garret, in dungeon, on the scaffold; and for women dwelling in the very blackness of darkness of despair. Through divers words Christ proclaimed his sense of the value of man's soul, but by such wondrous deeds of sympathy he proved

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by his life the sincerity of his speech. We cannot paint in colors too rich the worth of those for whom the Christ did live and die.

But when even an event like this expressed but imperfectly Christ's sense of the value of the soul, and men murmured that he was eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, Jesus added to the parable of the two debtors the parable of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. Taken altogether, literature holds no other such string of literary pearls. In words of matchless beauty each parable portrays the lost soul and the seeking Saviour, but each from an angle peculiar to itself. The lost coin gets its meaning from a singular custom of that far-off time. On her marriage day the bride receives from her father a few pieces of gold. These are her peculiar possession, and may never be used even by her husband. By reason of their preciousness, each coin has a hole bored through it, and all are strung upon the hair of the bride, and so worn through life. But in the Eastern houses, with few windows, and made dark to keep out the heat, houses that were also storehouses for grain and oil, whose floors were often covered with rugs that concealed the cracks, the loss

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of the coin was frequent, and its finding a matter of singular rejoicing. Indeed, there are the best of reasons for believing that Christ's parable grew out of the fact that some woman had lost a coin, upon whose finding turned the right of heritage to her father's estate, both for herself and for her children. It was as if some woman of to-day had lost the will that bequeathed to her a father's estate. If the disappearance of the coin awakened great anxiety among her children, who came from time to time, in anxious inquiry, its finding was a matter of intense interest to all in the community.

Out of some such event that had stirred the excitement of an entire village Christ drew this beautiful lesson with regard to the loss of the soul and its recovery again. How exquisite the imagery involved in the gold coin! As a precious metal it had a value in itself. Gold was useful in trade and commerce, and also chiseled into instruments of convenience or ornament. To the coin's intrinsic value was added the stamp of an emperor's image. The might and majesty of a government stood behind this little disk, while the shining symbol given to the woman by her father, long since

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dead, connected her with the father's lands, and became the channel for wealth for her children. And when the coin was found to be missing, perhaps so carefully hidden that it could not be found, or perhaps stolen, the gold lost had no power to recover itself, and was useless as the veriest pebble. When Christ lifted up that lost coin, it shone like the sun, as a symbol of worth beyond compare. Like the gold, the soul has its own native, pristine value. Like the gold coin, the soul is struck through and through with the stamp and image of a moral governor who stands back of man's life and who has pledged himself to man's happiness and victory. If usage can wear away the soft metal, if it can dim the superscription and deface the image of an emperor, the gold may be remelted and the image stamped anew. Oh, wonderful type of the soul that bears about in itself the marks of its father, whose image may never be entirely defaced, and whose superscription is eternal!

More exquisitely beautiful the parables of the lost sheep and the lost son. A thousand times, in song and story, have men tried to interpret the pathetic story of the sheep that has

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gone astray. Ten thousand times, through color and canvas, artists have depicted the downward career of the prodigal son. But the essence of the parable is not the peril of the silly sheep, that in its stupidity knows not of the danger of the precipice, and dreams not of the death that comes through dog or wolf. It is the anxiety of the shepherd that glows in this beautiful story. The same great thought runs through the story of the lost son, in that it is the father's heart that aches, during all that period when the son is enjoying the pleasures of sin, giving free play to the delights of the body, denying himself nothing that his eyes saw, no pleasure of which his ear heard, no luxury that his passion coveted. For his lower impulses had become his guides and counselors. What a story of the gradual deterioration of man's soul! The youth becomes restless and dissatisfied with the code of morals in his father's house. Yonder on the horizon stands the gate of the great city. A deep, wild curiosity to see life and the world disturbs him by day and by night. That others have gone away in innocence and health, and after a career of passion returned wrecked and broken, alarms him not one whit.



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He was tired of being warned against temptation in the morning, and of giving an account of his companions late at night. He longed for liberty, a liberty that was license. Unrestrained, and without any check or thrall, and crowned with his splendid health, he took the gold that his father had given him, went into a far country, where his excesses would not reach the ears of his father. For a time all events went well. He drank the cup of pleasure—spiced, perfumed—to the very dregs.

While his gold lasted, flatterers crowded about him, and sycophants echoed his foolish jests, laughed at his simple stories, and still he was not wise enough to perceive that they were spoiling him of his treasure, that his gold paid all the bills, and that he was always the host. But the path from the gilded house of pleasure to the pen in which swine are confined was short, and soon he found himself so poor that he stood upon the very edge of starvation and death itself. Uncared for, unregarded, and unloved, he awakened to the falsity of his life. Coming to himself, he seemed like one who had been passing through hours of insanity, through some cruel fever that made him unconscious, whose hideous dreams re-

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mained in the mind, with their warning and alarm. And when, through pride, he had sought every possible avenue of relief, at last, in utter despair, he turned homeward to find that if only in his ruin he had remembered his father, not for one moment had his father ever forgotten him. The beauteous child, flattered and deceived, in an evil moment flees and wanders, and goes from bad to worse; and the mother's heart is sore through years; hearing from her, and yet not being able to recover her. But at twilight on some evening, as the mother sits and sees things darkly, there comes a form, ill-clad, with feeble step and sunken cheek, through the open gate. The mother knows her, and with open arms rushes to embrace the child that has come home. No word is spoken; both hearts are pouring out a sacred tide. She bears her child into the house. "Mother, I have come home to die." "Live, my child, live." Oh, beautiful story of God's love, that is stronger than a father's, purer than a mother's. That with overflowing generosity forgives those who have gone wrong, though the erring one is not worthy to partake of the crumbs that fall from the father's table. Through very weight

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of love the father will not listen to the confession, but places the returned wanderer at the head of the table, and makes him heir of the estate.

Now the very essence of these beautiful parables is that God is love, and that he suffers more in the sins of his children than do his wandering sons and daughters. It stirs our wonder that nothing is said about the fright of the lost sheep, or the homesickness of the lost son, but that we are told only of the anxiety and alarm and ceaseless search of the shepherd, and of the quenchless solicitude of the broken-hearted father. The gold coin is lost, but it lies perfectly content under the rushes and dirt. The silly sheep wanders far, but, a little tired, lies down in a doze until the morning comes. It is not the son, but the father, whose hair whitens with anguish, waiting, longing, praying for the day when this boy who seems to be sinking in vice, shall come to himself and return to his father's house. Man breaks God's laws, his body is full of the sins of his youth, passion quenches the light in the eye, sensuality seams his features, vice sets its brand upon his forehead and dims forever his divine beauty. Sowing to the flesh, of the

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flesh he reaps corruption; and yet, where the sinner suffers one pang, God suffers a thousand. It may be said that man's sins have broken God's heart.

The old theology taught us that God could not suffer. Ceaselessly it emphasized his impassivity. Well do I remember my old professor of theology's insistence that God dwells far above all suffering by reason of man's sins. Through his human body and earthly experience Christ suffers and sympathizes with man's troubles. But, said the great teacher, God's perfections would be marred by suffering. He dwells afar off in the vast empyrean, lifted up above all pain, eternally young, eternally strong, eternally beautiful. Yet of all the misconceptions that were ever taught concerning God, what could be more contradictory of Christ's portrayal of God's love! The measure of greatness in any living thing is sensitiveness to suffering. A stone suffers not at all, it has no life. The oyster suffers a little, it has a single nerve. The bird is higher, and suffers for two or three days when its nest is robbed. Higher still the deer, that goes every whither, moaning for its fawn, and whose suffering lasts for

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weeks. The Indian mother is higher, and remembers her babe through the summer and the winter. But what sensitiveness comes when the Christian mother appears. God hears her prayer; the sweet babe lies in her arms. Her mother love worships it almost as a form of divinity. Such beauty of body and mind belong to her child that nothing seems too high for her hopes. One night she wrestles with the death angel, and is defeated. The years come and the years go, but still the child is with her. A half century passes. Grown gray, at midnight she tosses upon her pillow, and wakens midst a flood of tears, to find the babe's arms about her neck, and the child's soft, cooing voice within her ears. For time avails not to cool the ardor of her love. Though a mother forget her child, God doth not forget his sinning sons and daughters. Higher than a mother's and more sensitive is the heart of God. The æolian harp is so sensitive that the softest zephyr wakens music among its strings; and there is no heartache, and no pain, and no cry of the transgressor that does not touch the strings of sensitiveness and sympathy in the mind of God. For he who beholds his pilgrim band going across

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the years, stumbling, wandering, falling, bleeding, dying, follows each pilgrim heart with exquisite sympathy, and with infinite solicitude.

The angel of his providence goes before the prodigal son. The angel of his goodness encamps on young Jacob's right hand. The angel of his bounty encamps on his left. The angels of his mercy follow after, to correct the transgressor's mistakes and undo his sins. The angels of his love brood and flutter above this sleeping Jacob. The wrongdoer wakes and sleeps, as it were, in the very heart of God, whose solicitude no man can fathom. Of criminals it is said that the detective agency is now so organized that no wrongdoer can escape. Though the absconder hide in the garret, though he make his bed in some deep mine, though he take a ship and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, he cannot escape the sleuth who follows him. At last the net of the avenger snares his feet, and he is drawn back to the prisoner's cell. Be it reverently said, no prodigal son can escape the sleuthlike love of God's pursuing providence. Go where you will, you cannot elude it. Though you ascend up into heaven, God's

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love is there; though you descend into the grave, his love is there; though you make your bed among the vicious and the depraved, God's love is there, still pursuing, still calling back to purity and happiness. Though your way end in the dungeon or on the scaffold, one love burns on—the love of God. You cannot elude him. At last his love will find you out and bring you back from the husks into the Father's house.

Plainly men have misunderstood the nature of God. They have emphasized his justice. It is said that holiness is his crowning attribute. The law of rectitude must be conserved. To preach his love, we are told, at the expense of justice, is mere sentimentalism and mush. All moral distinctions will go down, it is said, unless we magnify justice. Yet justice, without love, is mere vengeance. Punishment without love is mere abuse, and degrades him who is punished and him who punishes. Purity without love is an icicle. Holiness without love is the sunbeam with the warmth taken out of it, mere cold, white light. But love holds, justice holds, purity holds, penalty within itself. The boy plays truant. The father learns of it at night. His brow is black

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as a thunderstorm. His mouth is drawn with anger. "Go upstairs!" he thunders to the child. In his alarm the child meditates all manner of lies. And when the father has soundly beaten the boy, the child clenches his teeth and hands, and sets himself to endure, and determines to play truant twice as long next time, since a beating awaits him in any event. Justice has been done, and this justice without love has been as impotent to produce righteousness in the truant boy as arctic storms that strike the earth with the stroke of an earthquake are to produce harvests.

Another child plays truant, the child of a widowed mother. How her heart aches. Has the boy forgotten his revered father? Is she to be left desolate? Is the child coming up to wrongdoing and vagrancy? Her love ponders, and praying, she hopes to find a way. That night, when all is still in the house, she creeps up to his room, to find him tossing and sleepless upon his pillow. She gathers him into her arms, her tears fall like rain. She whispers, "We are alone now; we must be everything to each other. All that I had hoped for in your father is now gathered up in you. You will never disappoint me?"



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In an agony of repentance and confession the boy tells her that he has played truant, and how miserable and unhappy he has been all the day long. That if she will forgive him this one time the sin will never be repeated. Love is a strange alchemist. Its flames forever consume the boy's sin. At last he sleeps, redeemed by the justice of a mother's love, and later it is seen that what rigors and blows could not have done love hath accomplished. For love hath blows within itself, love hath pains, love hath eyes that are telescopic, love can use a knife, love chastens and punishes—and God is love. He loves because it is his nature. Christ's death did not change his attitude toward men, but God's pre-existing attitude of deathless love brought in Christ's death. From the beginning of time God has been abroad upon his message of recovery. He comes to seek and to save the lost. The more helpless the infant, the more help the mother owes it. The more grievously injured the child, the greater the debt of the skillful surgeon who is binding up the wounds and tying the bleeding arteries. The blacker David's sin or Saul's, the more solicitous the seeking love of God. Men run away from

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God. They plunge into sin as into a black bog. The youth secretes himself in some lair of vice and passion. Outcasts blast their lives and sere their souls and become the offscouring of creation, but though all men despair, God never despairs. He loves the lost, because it is his nature to love. Just as a singer loves to sing, just as an artist loves to paint, just as an orator loves the full tide of speech, because he was born with this gift and genius, so God loves the sinner, and his love never slumbers nor sleeps. Your sin cannot exhaust his love, your years of vagrancy, of profligacy cannot tire. His love burns on, and at last will conquer and bring you home.

In the center of the community stands a beautiful girl, universally admired, sought for, and loved. One day, oh, happy youth, the news goes forth that a man hath wooed and won her. Congratulations crowd in upon him from every side. A year passes over the new-founded home. One day, startled, she stands with wild eyes and dumb lips, mid a hideous dream. White without, is he really foul within? When fear becomes certainty, the heart breaks, and when the babe dies, she thanks God that

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the child cannot know the agony that she hath known. Then the man slips down past her, and one day she awakens to discover that he hath fled. And if I should tell you the story of her love it would be some writer's old, old story of a woman's deathless affection. Years, perhaps, later, a wrecked profligate, he steals in the darkness of the night, back to the little village, to hear that the wife of his youth is dead. And some man puts into the prodigal's hands the letter that the girl wife had left. And will it not read like this?

“My beloved, oh, my beloved, it is a year ago to-night that you went away from me. I love you still—never dream but that I love you still. I suppose that I am coming to my death. I had hoped to be here to welcome you back, but now it must be only this letter. You may be an old man when you return; you may think that you have forgotten your young wife. Ah, God, if I could but take your head upon my bosom where it used to lie; breathe into your mind all that is within my heart; but I have prayed, and this little letter will tell my story. When you read it you will have had enough of this outer world, and the tides of my love, coming in again, and break-

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ing with longing for you, will cleanse your life. For you can never escape my love. Fleeing, you have not eluded your young wife. For heaven itself will not be heaven without you. Though you sink into the lowest hell, God's love and mine will find you out. The Saviour is very pitiful. Come back. Come back from the far country. God will forgive everything. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow. I know that Jesus Christ will seek and save you. Though lost, you are still my pride and joy; and though you climb high and ascend up into heaven, my love will find you there; and though you fall into the lowest hell of sin, my love will find you there. And if you do not repent here then God will find you there, for his love burns to the lowest hell, and there you must repent, midst the penalties that consume, because you did not repent here under the blue skies, midst the providences that blest you. Oh, my beloved, my latest, last thought is love for you. Come back, oh, my beloved!"

Is not this God's love? The drama of man's sin and God's love? If death cannot quench a woman's love, think you that sin can quench

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the love of God? Know you not that he is on the side of the depraved? It is never too late to mend. Have you sunk so low that you cannot make your confession to the wife of your bosom? Grown hard and callous and gray in sin, do you seek to conceal your past even from your mother's knowledge? Is your life like a deserted house, full of vice and vermin, a house into whose chambers you do not dare take even your most intimate friend? God cares for you. He has set his heart upon winning you. Begin again. Let the old life and habits fall away like rags from your shoulders. Open your mother's Bible. Lift your hands to your father's God. These falling tears perhaps will cleanse your eyes that they may read the better the story of God's love. If your strength is as weak as the reed, trampled down by some wild beast of passion, remember the bruised reed God will not break. If now again a little spark of aspiration and repentance flames up, remember he will fan the spark into the flame of victory. Thou homeless boy, in the great city, thou broken-hearted girl, come home to God. He is waiting, and he will wait. Add not to his

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grief and pain. Come soon—come late—  
thou wilt find him at the door, his locks wet  
with the dew of the night, waiting to bring you  
in out of the darkness and the storm. For  
God is love.

SOUL GROWTH: ITS SCOPE, ITS LAWS, AND  
ITS DIVINE MEASUREMENTS.





## CHAPTER IV.

### SOUL GROWTH: ITS SCOPE, ITS LAWS, AND ITS DIVINE MEASUREMENTS.

In general, we know that growth means life. Dead things never grow, neither stones nor pearls. Living things grow — seeds, birds, young children. The capacity for growth also ranks the living thing in the scale of plant or animal life. We rank vegetables low, because in six weeks the lettuce seed has come to its full enlargement. But not so the giant trees of California. Full two hundred years separate the seed of the redwood from the vast tree, into which woodsmen have hollowed the tunnel, through which the stage-coach drives. The capacity for growth also ranks the animals. Soon we shall find the young robin in its nest. When four months have passed over that nest the bird has come to the full power of flight and song. But if the lark be born close to its maturity, twenty summers and winters stand between the infant and its full stature. It is the extension of the period of growth, therefore, that separates man from

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all the rest of the animal creation. Just because the period of infancy and youth was prolonged for full twenty years, it became necessary for the father and mother to unite for the protection of the child, so that out of that capacity for growth grew monogamy, the foundation of the home, the school, and all civil institutions. But it is not the body that has marked capacity for growth so much as it is the intellect, the heart, and the conscience. The child grows most rapidly at about twelve years of age, shooting up several inches in a single summer, while the mind can grow by leaps and bounds at seventy. This is the test of a strong man, that when you meet him after an absence of two months you marvel at the transformation of his views. Now and then a child's body is overtaken by a strange disease, when the growth of the bone is arrested, and the world is full of men and women whose intellectual and spiritual growth was arrested at a certain stage.

This appears in the persons who have lost the power to like a new author, who can no longer accept a new philosophy. However, all this is contra-natural. We know that Walter Scott had reached the summit of his physical

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maturity and had gone five years down the western slope before he wrote his first novel, yet after that he mastered the laws of fiction, and became the world's supreme artist in historical narrative. Ignorant men sometimes suppose that the capacity for growth in memory is soon reached. When used and developed, however, memory grows more plastic with the growing years. The Roman scholar mastered the Greek alphabet, and learned to write and speak in Greek, after he had passed seventy; and Sir William Jones tells us when he was at the beginning of his old age, that if the ordinary man would only keep up his study of languages, he could learn a new language as a pastime in the evenings of a single winter, after he was threescore years of age. But the capacity for growth appears chiefly in things that are spiritual. It is in the higher gifts and graces that there is such capacity for enlargement. Witness Saul—ambitious, selfish, cruel, at thirty, and then reversing his life and becoming the embodiment of self-sacrifice, and toleration, and charity. Witness Africanus, the South African chief, in middle age a cannibal, blood-thirsty, cruel to the last degree, but who

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fifteen years later stood forth in the presence of Queen Victoria, a scholar, eloquent, the founder of a new state, a Christian thinker whose place in history is as sure as that of Toussaint L'Ouverture. The fact is, the soul, made in the image of God, is crowded with latent forces, stored with germinal faculties, every crack and crevice big with possibilities. This is the great argument for immortality, the capacity for infinite growth in man. Dying, the soul is like a ship that disappears beyond the horizon, but in disappearing is like the Mayflower, with its cabin filled with roots and vines and bags of grain, living growths that were destined to cover a continent with vineyards, orchards, and harvests, from Maine to Oregon.

Having confessed the soul's unique capacity for growth, what is this enlargement of the soul? It has been said that "the manufacture of souls of a good quality is the first business of a great republic." Now, souls of a good quality are not manufactured, but grown. If we should distinguish between souls of bad quality and souls of good quality, we would say that these latter are wise, just, happy, self-sufficing, and Christian. The man

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is wise—toward all truth in books, in nature, and in life. The man is just—his feet run along those highways of law that God has set up for the soul's progress. He is happy—that is, he is in harmony with his own record, his conscience, and his God. He is self-sufficing—that is, he is equal to all the emergencies of life, and with a surplus of strength he thrusts his broad shoulders under another's burden, and carries that in addition to his own. But all these signal qualities are growths; they are not suddenly thrust upon men. Indeed, Christ's every parable regarding the Christian life is one that interprets it as a growth. The kingdom of character is a seed. But the wild grass grows into the rich barley. The wild thorn becomes the red rose, that is doubled. The wild orange, bitter and acid, becomes the orange that is seedless and full of sugar. And the kingdom of heaven is planted in the soul as a seed, and slowly grows and expands to its full size and fruitage. Another figure that was used to interpret the growth of character is architectural. Character is a noble building; it is based on the body, indeed, as a marble palace has foundations that rest in the mud and go down to the

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rock. How beautiful is the figure! What a hall is reason! What a gallery, full of the pictures of the past, is memory! What decorated walls are to be found in the chambers of imagery! How do housewives fill their garrets, just under the roof, with all manner of cast-off furniture and old garments! But the upper story of the soul is like a glass observatory. Often faith stands in its tower of observation and hope forecasts far-off and future things. No marble mansion was ever erected in a night save in fairy stories. Little by little the materials for a great building are brought together. Slowly grows the soul. Each thought is a nail, each habit is a pillar, each noble memory of friend beloved is the face of an angel found in the frescoes on the wall. Slowly the soul's house is furnished and adorned, and oft the Stranger Divine is a guest welcomed and knocking at the door. To this rich figure Christ adds a third, when he likens the Christian life to an education. It was as if he had said: "The church is my school, you are my pupils, life is a great lecture-room, joy, sorrow, love, work, victory, defeat, temptation, books, death—these are the life teachers." To make the soul great—

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this is the purpose and aim of the Christian life, for individual worth is the very genius of Christianity. One great soul is more influential for inspiration and encouragement than a million lesser ones, just as one Shakespeare can do more for the world than a million penny-a-liners. God saves by a few. He raises up one Mary Ware as the far-off founder of the Red Cross movement, and then innumerable women go up to her level. He raises up one Paul or one Luther, and nations climb to the heights where these exalted spirits dwell. In the Paris World's Fair the treasures of the world were brought together. What pictures! What architecture! What arches and columns! What bridges! What marvelous tools and looms and ships! But a great character, builded by thirty years of life, is an achievement incomparably richer. What treasure in a hero, in whom all heroism, all disinterested love, all wisdom, all patience and self-sacrifice, are united. If it takes a long time to grow a tree, to ripen a scholar, to construct a cathedral, how much more to grow a man into the full stature of one who resembles Jesus Christ! You have inaugurated a great enterprise in

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your youth, and the building of your character is worthy of all thought and ambition and tireless toiling.

Since the development of character is the aim and purpose of the Christian life, what is the inspiration and motive power? We know that growth is from within. Enlargement comes from a hidden impulse. The hands of the clock are on the outside, but the motive power is in the mainspring in the inside. Even children understand that there must be something "that makes the hands go round."

All these exterior movements that we name good will, help to the poor, honesty, truth-speaking, are determined by some inner motive and impulse. Now, this inner motive must be personal, for the dynamic of the soul is never an exterior thing of mechanics. The poor boy receives some kindness from a great citizen, who lends him encouragement, and henceforth the man dwells in the child's mind like a demi-god. Slowly his influence regenerates the youth. The young soldier looks up to his Garibaldi, and from him receives inspiration and guidance, and that which holds in the lower realms of intellect holds of the higher faculties of the soul. For Paul this



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was the dynamic of life, "For me to live is Christ." Over against Saul's cruelty, murderous hate, stoning of Stephen, stood the all-radiant Christ, praying, "Father, forgive them." That heaven of Christ's beauty made hideous the hell of hate in which Saul dwelt. In that hour Saul was transformed, and became Paul. At first he groped his way. Soon he felt that he had been like one standing on the brink of an awful precipice, who had been saved by one who had drawn him back to a place of safety at the risk of his own life. At last the full glory and beauty of his Master's life were unveiled before Paul's vision, and in an abandon of devotion he gave his life to his Master. Henceforth no sacrifice, no privation, was too great. He would have gladly died a thousand times for his Master, had opportunity been offered. His creed was Christ, for Christ was the revelation of God, and of love, for man's need. For Paul to worship was Christ; to this unseen Saviour his prayers and aspirations went up as naturally as the white mists from the sea float toward the sun that draws them. To think and speak was Christ, for every form of literature moved toward the beautiful that had

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its perfection in Christ's spirit. To meet men day by day was Christ, who identified himself with all earth's little ones. For him to die was Christ, for this Divine One had brought unto him his hope of immortality. If Jesus Christ has kindled a vital spark within a soul, he will feed it to the full flame. If his divine inspiration has been implanted, he will not withdraw it. What an outlook is the Christian's! Blessed with these germinal gifts that are susceptible of such infinite enlargement, living in a world where every event and duty tends toward growth, and ministers to enlargement, with the inspiration and aim of life to develop character after the pattern of Jesus Christ.

What, now, are the laws of soul growth? They are not supernatural, or contra-natural, but natural and simple, and within the comprehension of a child. The first law is the law of food. Every event in the earth about us interprets this principle. All things that live must have bread. The mineral is bread to the vegetable; the vegetable is bread unto the lower animals, and the lower animals are bread unto the higher quadrupeds. These higher animals that swim in the sea or fly

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through the air or run in the forest are bread unto man. In a certain way the parents are bread unto their children. The teacher's wisdom gives bread unto the pupil. Truth in books gives succor to all who read. The spirit and words of the jurist are become nourishment to the youth studying the problems of justice. Christ is bread unto the soul. This is the law of life, the necessity of man's being. There is no growth, therefore, without succor and daily nourishment. Other things being equal, the measure of a man's power is the amount of wholesome food that he can thoroughly assimilate and turn into rich red blood for thinking. But God will not send angels to you to feed you with this bread. He cares for the sparrows by ripening the harvest, but God asks the sparrows to get up early in the morning and range every whither searching for their food. Physically God gives the grain, but men must grind it into corn and make their own bread. The necessity of finding the truth, and preparing it, is upon you. Read, therefore, widely, and on every side. Read this divine book of life. Within its pages you will find the condensed wisdom of all libraries. It holds the story of

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statesmen and judges and poets and prophets and merchants and kings and servants and apostles and heroes. It will show you a man that stands for every crisis in your life, for every temptation that will meet you, and either by his yielding to sin and his sufferings, or by his adherence to right and his happiness, offers you on the one hand warning and alarm, and on the other hand hope and victory. There are forty chapters that you ought to commit to memory at the earliest possible moment. And there are twenty classic hymns of the church that should at once become intellectual treasure, held forever in your memory. But you must read other books and find other food. The Christian is to be the one universal man. All art is his, for God made the beautiful. All the sciences and literatures are his—God is back of all truth. His all the fascinating problems of the market-place and forum, for God dwells like leaven in society. There is no interest of the home, of the legislative hall and the library, there is nothing that belongs to wit or humor, or eloquence or art, or nature, that is not ours, because all are Christ's and Christ is God's. We are therefore to break down all intellectual horizons,

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expelling all narrowness, and ignorance, and intolerance. We are to fill our minds with all the inspirations of hope and love. We are to go every whither, searching for food for the soul, remembering that God and Christ are the true bread, and their influence falls like the manna from heaven.

The second law of soul growth is the law of exercise. Food is necessary, but food may become poison. Indeed, without exercise a wheaten loaf is as deadly as a rifle bullet. There is an eating that brings life, but the youth may eat and die. It is a proverb that "Fret and stuff kill most people." Now, the antidote of fret is hope, and the antidote of stuff is exercise. Do you ask why men are so healthy when they are poor, and why they go down with gout when they become rich? It is because they under-exercise, and therefore overwork the heart. The youth eats nourishing food, and this food as blood enters the heart. The problem is, how shall that blood be transported from the heart to the tips of the fingers, that the broken down tissues may be rebuilt? Sitting in one's chair compels the heart to pump with double power to force the blood to the tips of the fingers, but he who

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exercises for two hours in the open air, by mechanical means forces the blood to the tips of the fingers, halving the work of the heart. This Apollo, therefore, with his strength and beauty, with skin like marble, represents not simply wholesome food, but healthy exercise. But do not think that this law holds only in the realm physical. There is almost no limit to the growth, intellectual or spiritual, for the youth who exercises himself therein. Have you read Henry Drummond's sketch of his friend Mr. Moody? He is a widow's son, he is unschooled when he goes to Boston to begin his career at seventeen; refused entrance to the church because he does not understand what is involved; after six months is received; goes to Chicago at eighteen; hires four pews and fills them with strange young men; is refused a class in the Sunday school because he cannot read well; finally obtains permission to found a class of his own; the next Sunday morning comes in triumphant, followed by eighteen ragamuffins, rents a room on the North Side; when he cannot speak for himself, commits the Bible to memory and recites it in the prayer-meeting, for he is determined to speak; since he has no infor-

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mation of his own to give to the boys, reads from the writings of others; learns to pray by praying; learns to speak by speaking; learns to meet men by meeting them; and finally, becomes one of the greatest forces for good in the nineteenth century. What has been done can be done. This law of growth by exercise is for all. Buy the new books on the story of Christ and of the early Christian church. Do you want opportunity to exercise your Christian gifts? Find some church or school or club that needs them, then give yourself without stint. Your talent is waited for, somewhere. With a whole heart give yourself to finding bread for your own soul, and then by serving, by teaching, and praying, convert this soul food into character, and so become a great heart and a great mind for society's succor.

The third law is the law of rest. On these spring days the very trees before the door enforce this law. To-day mark the young maple's leaves, and note their size. Then after a week you will find that the leaf has quadrupled in size. In six weeks it will be full grown. In eight weeks the stem will have reached the limit of its extension for

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Solitude

this year. All the rest of the summer will be given up to rest for the purpose of hardening and strengthening. The soul, also, first grows and then rests. That is why Christ, at regular intervals, goes into the desert place, that he may refresh his tired power. That is why every moral teacher must be alone for two or three hours every day. He must not read, he must not think, he must simply brood, he must close his eyes and look, he must close his ears and listen. He must wait expectant for the messages that will come, and keep coming. That is why all the great things that have been done in literature have been wrought out in solitude. That explains the refusal of Charles Kingsley to go up to London, and why he lives and dies in the little village of Eversley. That is why Emerson leaves Boston and goes to Concord. That is why Agassiz studies, telling his visitor who wanted the scientist to lecture for him, "I am too busy to make money." That is why it is said that Christ went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as his custom was. Study and find intellectual bread for the soul. Exercise, indeed, and use your strength that you may be the stronger, and gain wisdom that



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you may be the wiser; but you must also rest and worship, that the quality of the soul may be the finer. Food brings bulk, exercise brings hardness, but worship brings refinement. There never was a great spiritual leader in a church who did not rest and worship, and who was not as regularly in his pew in his church as the sun is systematic in his rising. No young bride and groom can lay out their lives on the basis of boarding around at restaurants, and if you are a spiritual restaurateur, an occasional worshiper, at long intervals attending church, or in the habit of going once a year, you need not expect to achieve any great weight of spiritual character. But if you systematically remember and obey these three rules, you can scarcely hope for too much in the way of growth, happiness, and Christian influence. Remember that the greatest things are within the reach of all. God has no favorites. With Him all alike are equally worthy and equally beloved. There are only a few metaphysicians, interpreting causes; only a few philosophers putting truth in systematic form; only a few have the gift of eloquence and of song; and the reason is that no particular value attaches to any of these

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things. But the really great things have to do with the culture of the finer shades of character. All may be great in patience, and that is more than intellect. All may practice disinterested kindness and generous love. There is no one so obscure, with gifts so modest, but that he may carry about with him the fruits of the spirit of Christ. For what an orchard is this that grows in the soul! The sun ripens lemons and apples, that are mellowed only to decay, but in the soul's garden grows the tree of character. These boughs that are spiritual bear fruit once every month. For them there is neither winter nor summer, but every moment they send forth their sweet incense to bless each passer-by. But there never grew a tree that was not the better and stronger for being in a garden, where the husbandman digged about the roots, destroyed the enemies of blossom and of fruit, and nourished the trunk, with its strong, rich life. Now and then, an apple-tree is found growing in the lane, where the passing beasts crop the lower boughs, and where the boys rend away the branches, for the tree, belonging unto all, belongeth unto none. And there are good men who grow in

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character beyond the pale of the church, but there never was a man full of lovable and praiseworthy qualities outside of Christ's church who might not have been a better man within its fellowship. The school will do much for reason, the club will do much for the development of the social life, the political party will strengthen the institutions of the state, the home can nourish the affections of the heart, and the church can promote soul growth and character building. Early in life, therefore, every youth who is seeking to make the most possible of himself should choose some church home, there give his wisdom to children and youth, there labor to make the church a greater force in the community, there root and grow great friendships. Within the church let the youth live, and within the church let the old man die. If possible, choose some church full of great men and noble women. Remember Dr. Edward Everett Hale's maxim, to seek out daily some one who is greater than yourself. And the noblest spirits of all ages have not been too great to consecrate their genius to the promotion of Christ's work. Isaac Newton could forget his "Principia" in reading the story of

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Christ. Earth's greatest singers, its greatest poets, its supreme philosophers and statesmen, its heroic leaders and guides, have been as unique in their spiritual faith as in their mental gifts and political leadership. Lift up your ideals, and then rise to their level. Be not contented with mere negatives, but enrich your life with great positives. Feed hope, and have the courage of far-off and supreme things. Strengthen faith, the faith that brings you into fellowship with the good and great among men, with the One who is the greatest, the Divine Christ, our Saviour and Example, and with God, the Author of character, and the Finisher who crowns the life with enduring strength and beauty.











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